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OVER THE HILL  
TO THE  
WHITE HOUSE.

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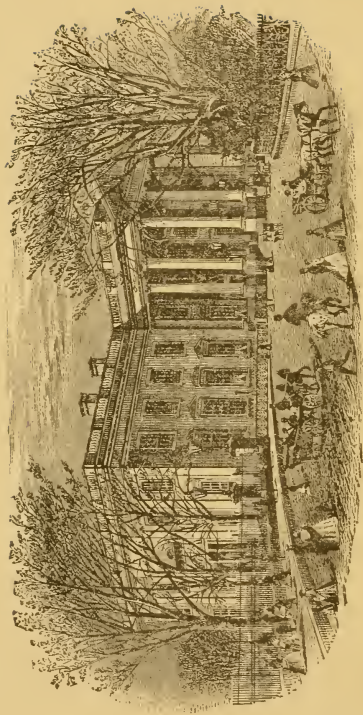








*JAMES A. GARFIELD.*



THE WHITE HOUSE.

OVER THE HILL

TO THE

WHITE HOUSE.

BY

MRS. E. W. ALLDERDICE.



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ELECTROTYPED BY CHARLES HURST,

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DEDICATED  
TO  
THE HONORED MOTHER  
OF  
PRESIDENT GARFIELD.



## PREFATORY NOTE.

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NO doubt my readers will remember the touching incident of Inauguration Day, when, after his speech, which awoke a throb of sympathy and patriotism throughout the length and breadth of the land, the President turned to his venerable, white-haired mother, who sat immediately behind him on the platform, and, bending his head, kissed her tenderly as though in loving gratitude for the care and guardianship, which had finally brought him this crowning honor. His action, and the feelings it aroused, moved me to transcribe this little Poem as a tribute of the admiration we must all feel for a mother who realized the great responsibility devolving upon her, and who through manifold trials so nobly sustained her trust.

E. W. A.



# OVER THE HILL TO THE WHITE HOUSE.

---

 HE way was steep and rugged  
And the hill-side hard to climb,  
But at last the summit greets me  
In the steady march of time.

Three score and ten have vanished  
Along the track of years,  
Some have been bright and happy,  
And many filled with tears.

I mind me of the winter  
Full fifty years gone by,  
When my husband kissed and blessed me,  
Then laid him down to die.

We had loved and wedded early  
In our happy time of youth,  
And were help-meets for each other  
In very deed and truth.

We had struggled on together,  
And the toil seemed sweet and light,  
When we sat and watched the gloamin'  
Till it deepened into night,

While the stars came out by thousands  
In the summer evening sky,  
And we talked about the Power  
Which had placed them thus on high.

My days were never lonely,  
And my nights were never long;  
For I woke at early dawning,  
With the lark's clear matin song.

I loved the blessed sunlight,  
And the cool, refreshing rain,  
Which bud and blossom prayed for,  
And never prayed in vain.

God granted all our wishes  
When he sent our eldest boy,  
The love-light of our cottage,  
Our crowning sheaf of joy.

I scarcely missed the sun-shine,  
Or the star-lit summer skies,  
My sunshine lay beside me,  
My stars were baby's eyes.

The cares my darling brought me,  
    Were a mother's toil of love ;  
He seemed an angel lent me  
    From the Heavenly courts above.

I prayed for strength to help me  
    In my training of a man,  
To mould and guide his nature  
    As a mother only can.

It seemed so strange that mothers  
    This duty dared to shirk,  
Surely a soul to care for,  
    Is woman's noblest work !

But there came another shortly,  
    And another followed still ;  
And feeble human nature  
    Crushed down God-given will.

These treasures all were welcome,  
But my house of flesh was weak,  
And the cunning youngsters knew it,  
Before they learned to speak.

My high resolves soon vanished,  
My prayers grew faint and low ;  
I went drifting through the shallows,  
Where many mothers go.

And then the last was given,  
Another sturdy son ;  
I had prayed so for a daughter,  
But God still granted none.

My grief broke out in sobbing,  
That I felt was wrong to do ;  
And my husband said, " This baby  
May be son and daughter, too ;

“ God knoweth best, my darling,  
So trust Him to the end ;  
You will find in the hereafter,  
He chastens as a friend. ”

The blessed little children,  
They bring their love along,  
It enfolds them as a blanket,  
And gladdens like a song.

My tiny disappointment  
Became my crowning joy :  
The longed-for daughter could not  
Have been dearer than my boy.

He filled my inmost being  
With a love so strong and deep,  
That it quite enthralled my senses,  
And wrapped my soul in sleep.

I could not see, my husband  
Was failing day by day,  
That the angel on the threshold  
Was calling him away.

He was very still and patient,  
He made no moan nor sigh,  
But he put his house in order,  
And then laid him down to die.

And so I learned the meaning  
Of that bitter word "alone,"  
My children shrieked with sorrow,  
But my heart seemed turned to stone.

Kind friends soon came about me,  
But I cared not what they said ;  
The living crowded on me,  
When my heart was with the dead.

They mourned my sad bereavement,  
And said, "It was a shame  
That the babe was in the cradle ;  
What a pity that he came ;

The other boys might help me,  
But he seemed a weakly mite ;  
"Twould be better if the good Lord  
Were to take him out of sight. "

Back from deep wells of sorrow,  
Came the spirit of my youth,  
And I spake out in my anguish,  
Some bitter words of truth :

"My last God-given treasure  
Should be my care through life ;  
I would atone as mother,  
For my negligence as wife. "

I asked them not for pity,  
I was richer far than they ;  
The angel left my children,  
When he bore my love away.

So they took offence and left me ;  
And I prayed with heart and might,  
That God would stand beside me,  
And guide my plans aright.

They were troubled years that followed,  
But I struggled on with hope.  
Looking forward to the mountain,  
And not backward down the slope ;

My boys were brave and loving,  
And we fairly barred the door  
Against the wolves of famine,  
That forever track the poor.

We loved each other better,  
For the trials that we shared,  
And amid our many crosses,  
We never once despaired.

My elder boys were workers,  
And had no troubled dreams,  
But my baby thought and pondered,  
Over many wondrous schemes.

“He would grow to manhood shortly,  
And would make himself a name;  
I should see it bright emblazoned,  
On the fairest scroll of fame;

I should have a queenly palace,  
And should live in pride and state,  
It was coming in the future,  
He would wrestle it from fate.

Loud his brothers laughed and taunted,  
But he bore it with a smile,  
Brought his books and read and pondered,  
Planning deeply all the while.

Presently they called him "laggard,"  
Said he "shirked his share of toil,"  
Said he was "a thriftless scholar,  
And had better till the soil."

Laughed to scorn his learned phrases,  
Called him "milk-sop" to his face,  
But he bore it like a martyr,  
Patiently, with Christ-like grace.

Read to them the old-time story,  
Record from Egyptian lands,  
Where a nation rose to power,  
Through a younger brother's hands.

Then he kissed me, bade God bless me,  
Laid his books aside with care,  
And went out amid the toilers,  
Working well as any there.

Back again, when evening shadows,  
Fell upon the bars of gold  
And athwart the purple twilight,  
Down the veil of darkness rolled.

He came blithely ; all the love-light  
Of his blessed happy heart  
Making bright my tiny cottage,  
For we could not live apart,

Came to greet me, clasp me fondly,  
Show me with a look of pride,  
The first earnings of his boyhood,  
Came to place them at my side.

All he gave me, speaking softly,  
    “Of the mansion he would own,  
Where I should be honored mistress,  
    Where I should not be alone,

But should live among the noble,  
    Gifted, great, in all the land.”  
And his brothers laughed out loudly  
    At his palace made of sand.

Far into the midnight darkness,  
    I could see his candle shine,  
Knew he worked, and planned and studied  
    For this lordly home of mine.

Then I wondered not that Mary  
    Pondered o'er her God-child's fate,  
Walked forever in his shadow,  
    Watched him early, watched him late.

Felt within her bosom glowing,  
All the glory and the pride,  
Of his wondrous earthly mission,  
Though she knew not aught beside.

And I wondered if this angel,  
Who had lain so near my heart  
Might become a Christ's evangel,  
One who chose the better part.

He revered things good and holy,  
Joined the throng who knelt in prayer,  
Grew in strength, increased in stature,  
Did what any man could dare.

Then I listened, weeping softly,  
With a mingled fear and joy,  
When I heard him pray in meeting,  
And I knew it was my boy.

Wider, farther, crept the story,  
Of the widow's youngest son,  
And men praised him for his courage,  
For the victory nobly won.

He had battled long and bravely,  
'Gainst an adverse wind and tide,  
But his cry was "on and upward,"  
And he heeded nought beside.

Many summers came and vanished,  
He had won his scroll of fame,  
And his college halls resounded  
With the echo of his name.

Then the love of early manhood,  
Thrilled him to his finger tips,  
And I heard the "old, old story,"  
From my cherished darling's lips.

Half in gladness, half in sorrow,  
Sat I, listening to the tale,  
Feeling all at once the knowledge,  
I was passing down the vale;

Feeling that my spring had vanished,  
And my summer lost its bloom,  
And with autumn's fruitful harvest,  
I would ripen for the tomb.

So I loved my gentle daughter,  
Loved her for the joy she brought,  
And we harmonized together,  
Care of him our constant thought.

Very strong and true, she loved him,  
Side by side they climbed the height,  
But within, my heart, I whispered  
'Twas to me he owed his might.

Mine the hand that fed and nourished  
All the good within his soul,  
I had trained his noble spirit,  
She might help him to its goal.

Soon the Nation called for soldiers,  
And I buckled on his sword,  
Though my spirit groaned and fainted,  
And my tears like torrents poured.

Prayed I to the God of battles,  
Prayed with special trustful faith,  
And my earnest prayer was answered  
As the blessed scripture saith,

“Ask in faith, and nothing doubting,  
God will answer, He will hear;  
Perfect love,” the Saviour tells us,  
“Casteth out all shade of fear.”

Then the State which loved him dearly,  
Sent him to protect her name,  
And I thought that now my baby,  
Had attained his highest fame.

But to-day I sat behind him,  
While the Nation hailed him chief,  
And the roll of human greatness,  
Has unclosed its final leaf.

“Surely now,” I thought within me  
“He’ll forget me in his pride ;”  
But the speech was scarcely over,  
When I found him at my side.

Low he bent his head to kiss me,  
Whispered soft within my ear,  
“I have won the station for you,  
Bless me quickly, mother dear.”

Now I live within the mansion,  
That he promised years before,  
And I see the great and gifted,  
Crowd within its open door,

And I pray God's choicest blessings  
May sustain him where he stands,  
Make him wiser than the rulers  
Of less favored foreign lands.

Give him wisdom, give him foresight,  
To descry the Nation's needs,  
So that men may follow gladly,  
Where his Christian courage leads.

Let me die while through our country,  
Rings the echo of his name,  
Lauded for its truth and goodness ;  
That will prove undying fame.

Back through all the happy summers,  
Goes my heart in dreams to-night,  
And I stand beside his cradle,  
In that gray December light;

When the neighbors looked with pity  
On the helpless baby there,  
And concluded that my burden  
Would be more than I could bear.

Then my husband's admonition,  
Comes to me from realms above,  
"Trust the Father! when he chastens,  
He is leading us in love."

Very softly move the shadows,  
Rolls away the tide of years,  
And I wake to find his children,  
Marvelling at Grandma's tears.

MARCH 4, 1881.











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